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**AUSTIN PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT  
STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2021**



# DRAFT

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Strategic Plan Project Team



## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

April XXth, 2016

Dear Austinites,

The City of Austin's Parks and Recreation Department is proud to provide you with our Strategic Plan, 2017 – 2021. The Strategic Plan holds the mission, vision, and values of our Department, and will serve as our guiding document for moving forward with a commitment to continuous departmental improvement.



Our parks, pools, trails, golf courses, recreational programming and other services are central to Austin's identity and key ingredients to the quality of life that makes living here so special. However, the tremendous changes occurring within our metropolitan area due to recent record population growth affect our capacity to meet our mission...*Inspire Austin to learn, play, protect, and connect by creating diverse programs and experiences in sustainable natural spaces and public places.* For Austin to remain among the most livable cities in the country, we must find ways to not just maintain what we have, but to advance our park system to meet the needs of our growing community.

The Strategic Plan, 2017 – 2021 offers a progressive framework for the provision of services, striking a balance between young and old, tradition and innovation, and the needs of one versus the needs of many. It also reinforces the expectation that we will meet national excellence standards set forth by the Commission for the Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) as we did in both 2007 and 2012. Moreover, our Strategic Plan, 2017 – 2021 emphasizes stronger partnerships between the City of Austin and private organizations, volunteers and community groups to efficiently support public spaces, parklands, and recreational opportunities for all of our residents.

Finally, using the Strategic Plan, 2017 – 2021 as both template and rudder, we will collaborate with stakeholders across the community to develop additional and enhanced parks, recreational facilities and cultural programs to meet the needs of our vibrant, growing and diverse population – and to keep them accessible, affordable and relevant to those who need them most.

I encourage you to get out and enjoy the many wonderful parks and amenities Austin has to offer. An active lifestyle — no matter your age or ability — is critical to quality of life.

Get out and play!

Sara L. Hensley, CPRP, Director Austin Parks and Recreation Department

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## CITY OF AUSTIN PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT AT-A-GLANCE

### Community Recreation

Recreation Centers	20
Computer Labs	14
After School Participants	17,604
Therapeutic Rec Centers	1

### History, Arts, & Nature Centers

Museums	4
Arts & Cultural Centers	4
Nature Centers	3
Nature Based Programs	200



### Miscellaneous

Parks	271
Miles of Trail	211
Off-Leash Dog Areas	12
Stages and Amphitheaters	10
Golf Courses	6
Disc Golf Courses	7
Community/Senior Gardens	20
Nationally Known Music Festival	1
Workforce FTEs	687.75
Cemeteries	5
Event Venues	7

### Playgrounds

Playground Facilities	101
Swing Structures	125
Playground Structures	139



### Aquatics

Pools	35
Splashpads	7
Swim Programs	45
Life Guards	750



### Athletics

Ball Fields	94
Tennis Courts	17
Basketball Courts	77
Skate Parks	1



### Public/Private Partnerships

PARC-YMCA North  
 Boathouses  
 Umlauf Museum & Sculpture Garden  
 Barton Springs Conservancy  
 Zilker Botanical Garden Conservancy



Mayfield Gardens  
 Millennium Youth Entertainment  
 Complex  
 Zilker Zephyr Train  
 Onion Creek Metropolitan Park Dist.

Austin Parks Foundation  
 Trails Foundation  
 Trail of Lights  
 Waller Creek Conservancy  
 Goodnight Ranch Development



## Introduction

As Austinites, we take great pride in our parks. Our parks provide us with beautiful backdrops for leisure and recreation activities, contact with nature, and fellowship with family and friends. It's through these opportunities that our parks enrich our community's public health, economic vitality and social services. The parks are an integral part of our heritage and have provided a venue for watershed events from the desegregation of Lions Golf Course, rallies for civil and women's rights at Woolridge Square, the activism for the protection of Barton Springs, to the many concerts and festivals in Zilker Park and Auditorium Shores that have helped establish our reputation as the Live Music Capital of the World. The parks have provided the stage for some of our most important community shaping events. As such, the Parks and Recreation Department takes great pride in rising to the challenges of preserving our past, providing superior stewardship over our present, and developing our future parks system.

With this Strategic Plan, the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) is taking definitive steps towards realizing a vision where it can continue to be an innovative leader in parks and recreation services. Through PAR's efforts, the City of Austin will have more inclusive, sustainable, and equitably distributed parklands, facilities, programs and amenities.

This Strategic Plan provides a road map to ensure specific services and products are delivered. This road map allows an organization to:

- Ensure that PAR leadership, staff, and Austin residents know where the Department is headed and how they are going to get there;
- Make Informed short- and long-range decisions that support the organization's mission; and
- Develop collaborative and innovative strategies to move the organization forward, focused on its purpose and goals.

Strategic planning empowers the Parks and Recreation Department to focus on its core mission and to prioritize its efforts to be effective and efficient in achieving its goals. The Strategic Plan's action strategies and tasks ensure each PAR division works in specific and measurable ways to fulfill the agency mission. PAR has taken a critical internal review of our organization and identified a strategic direction for the future as an innovative leader in parks and recreation experiences.



## VISION

The Parks and Recreation Department will be an innovative leader in parks and recreation experiences.

## MISSION

Inspire Austin to learn, play, protect and connect by creating diverse programs and experiences in sustainable natural spaces and public places

## VALUES

### **Lifelong Recreational Opportunities**

We promote lifelong recreation, cultural, environmental and educational opportunities for Austin's diverse communities.

### **Inclusion**

We strive to reflect diversity, equity and inclusion in all of our programs and services.

### **Health and Wellness**

We contribute to Austin's health and wellness by providing safe and accessible parks, facilities and programs.

### **Sustainability**

We work to improve environmental and recreational functions and improve the connection between people and the environment.

### **Accountability**

We commit to being professionally accountable to our customers, to our partners, to one another and to ourselves.

### **Collaboration**

We seek to strengthen partnerships between the City of Austin, private organizations, volunteers and community groups to efficiently provide recreational opportunities to our residents.

### **Customer Service**

We provide a world class parks system through exceptional customer service and stewardship.

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## HOW TO READ THE STRATEGIC PLAN DOCUMENT

This strategic plan document is the result of data gathering and a stakeholder input process that included a review of industry best practices, city demographics, economic and technology trends, and Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) specific statistics and financial information. This document serves to articulate the goals the Department will work to achieve over the next five years.

### Vision, Mission, Values

The vision, mission and value statements as defined below, provide the framework for the Strategic Plan. These statements are not set in stone and can be refined or changed over time to ensure they continue to meet the community's needs.

**Vision.** The vision statement reflects the desired future state which PAR seeks to attain. Vision statements inspire, energize, and create a mental picture of a community's aspirations.

**Mission.** The mission statement states PAR's fundamental purpose. It helps employees share a sense of purpose, guide where they focus their energies, and sets expectations. It describes what PAR will do today to make the City a better place tomorrow.

**Values.** Value statements represent the qualities of PAR's highest priorities and beliefs. They reflect how the PAR values its community, internal work environment, and employees.

### Goals, Strategic Initiatives, Action Strategies, and Tasks

The plan is structured from a general department-wide level to a detailed level. Strategic initiatives and action strategies describe higher level objectives whereas tasks outline very specific action steps.

**Goals** are areas where PAR will focus over the five-year planning period. The Plan's goals are complementary and support the overall vision and mission. There are five goals in PAR's Strategic Plan. (Labeled I-V)

**Strategic Initiatives** are specific topics within each goal that PAR will focus on to achieve that particular goal. Each Goal has at least one strategic initiative under it. (Labeled A to F)

**Action Strategies** are specific steps that PAR will take to accomplish the strategic initiatives and goals. Action strategies follow strategic initiatives. (Numbered 1 to 5)

**Tasks** are detailed assignments within action strategies that explain in further detail how PAR will accomplish the actions and initiatives. (Numbered i through v)



# IMAGINE AUSTIN

The Imagine Austin Plan is the City's comprehensive plan. In the development of our Strategic Plan, 2017-2022, we carefully considered the future of our parks system through the lens of our Imagine Austin Plan's six core principles.

## PLAN ON A PAGE

### GOAL I:

#### Implement Comprehensive Communication Strategies

- A. Develop a singular, organization-wide approach for public input and community engagement
- B. Develop effective tools for targeted public outreach
- C. Enhance and optimize internal communication

### GOAL II:

#### Provide Accessible, Diverse, Inclusive, and Innovative Programs and Services

- A. Review and report parkland gaps and appropriate use on an annual basis to our stakeholders
- B. Prioritize land development proposals and related projects in order to best address identified parkland, park amenities, and program gaps
- C. Evaluate the distribution of programs across the city
- D. Adopt a comprehensive and cooperative approach to identifying community needs and service gaps
- E. Meet ADA requirements

### GOAL III:

#### Protect Austin's Parkland and Facilities for Our Future Generations

- A. Design and maintain environmentally sustainable parks and facilities
- B. Establish and implement best practices to preserve assets and facilities
- C. Respond to Austin's water and energy conservation needs through integrated regional strategies

### GOAL IV:

#### Achieve and Maintain a Standard of Excellence for Parks Systems

- A. Provide safe parks and facilities
- B. Deliver excellent customer service
- C. Automate administrative and operational tasks to improve efficiency
- D. Attain national industry standards for parks and recreation programs and services

### GOAL V:

#### Diversify Funding Strategies for Austin Parks and Recreation Services

- A. Institute a department-wide cost recovery culture and plan
- B. Cultivate partnerships to enhance service delivery and operations
- C. Evaluate inter-jurisdictional shared land use and capital planning projects to ensure equitable cost distribution and resource allocation
- D. Leverage Austin's creative economy to supplement cultural, historical, and environmental programming

## Imagine Austin Core Principle



**GROW AS A COMPACT  
AND CONNECTED CITY**

## GOAL I

### Implement Comprehensive Communication Strategies

The City of Austin understands that it takes a variety of perspectives to create an inclusive and robust experience for our residents. The Parks and Recreation Department values citizen feedback and will continue to create opportunities to have an open and continuous dialogue with stakeholders regarding the quality of our parks, programs and services. Over the next five years, we will strengthen our outreach efforts and revise our internal systems and protocols to enhance our service delivery models and effectively meet the needs of our community.

#### A. Develop a singular, organization-wide approach for public input and community engagement

1. **Develop and implement a comprehensive Community Engagement Plan**
  - i. Identify a cross functional work team to create a department-wide policy for community engagement/public input
  - ii. Research best practices and standards for community engagement/public input
  - iii. Develop a department-wide training schedule covering the components of the community engagement process and guidelines
  - iv. Establish a set of standard operating procedures for implementing community engagement processes and guidelines

#### QUICK FACT

FY15 PARD conducted over 36 community engagement projects incorporating over 70 public meetings.



#### B. Develop effective tools for targeted public outreach

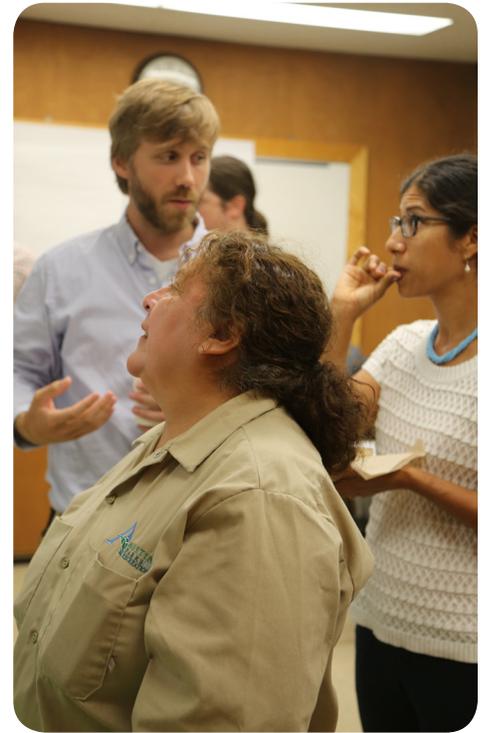
1. **Identify populations currently not served by the Parks and Recreation Department**
  - i. Conduct a comprehensive citizen survey annually
  - ii. Create an outreach plan for reaching parks and recreation non-users
  - iii. Increase participation of parks and recreation non-users
2. **Customize public engagement tools and strategies to reach target populations**
  - i. Create an inventory of translated forms/ brochures/printed materials



- ii. Standardize translation of printed materials
- 3. **Create marketing plans for PARD services to include specific methods to reach underserved populations**
- 4. **Evaluate programs and services to assess whether they meet the needs of the targeted populations**
  - i. Evaluate all program offerings for final program outcomes
  - ii. Identify trends and patterns found in core services and programs annually
  - iii. Create a standardized evaluation tool that aligns with desired outcomes

**C. Enhance and optimize internal communication.**

- 1. **Implement staff communication protocols and strategies to improve communication**
  - i. Task a work group to review current strategies and make recommendations for improvement
  - ii. Develop and adopt strategies to improve internal communication, document storage, and provide organized and open access to information
  - iii. Provide staff training for use of new technologies and protocols to ensure implementation of strategies
- 2. **Identify and implement technologies to modernize and improve internal communications**
  - i. Identify gaps in current communications technology
  - ii. Adopt technologies to improve document storage, reduce paperwork, and provide organized and open access to information
  - iii. Provide staff training for use of new technologies to ensure mission critical competencies



## Imagine Austin Core Principle



**THINK CREATIVELY  
AND WORK TOGETHER**

## GOAL II

### Provide Accessible, Diverse, Inclusive, and Innovative Programs and Services

The Austin Parks and Recreation Department is committed to contributing to the health and vitality of all Austinites by developing leadership opportunities for youth, promoting health and wellness, and fostering community engagement throughout the city. We acknowledge Austin’s rapid population growth and will work with the community to expand our reach by addressing service and access gaps within the PARD system including architectural, geographic and economic barriers. We recognize that if we want to achieve optimal access and usage of the park system, then we must engage in systematic practices to assess, prioritize, plan and remove barriers to the quality services that PARD provides and the community desires.

#### A. Review and report parkland gaps and appropriate use on an annual basis to our stakeholders

1. **Conduct geographic gap analysis of parks and park amenities annually**
  - i. Perform gap analysis of parkland describing diversity, density and quality of trees
  - ii. Perform gap analysis of park user amenities
  - iii. Identify city-wide priorities for purchasing parkland
2. **Develop a financial model for addressing the funding of parkland gap analysis**
3. **Develop criteria to determine appropriateness and use of acquired or donated parklands**
  - i. Apply criteria developed to determine whether a land acquisition or donation is appropriate for department use

#### B. Prioritize land development proposals and related projects in order to best address identified parkland, park amenities and program gaps

1. **Conduct a comprehensive gap analysis and use assessment of PARD facilities including pools, recreation centers and cultural centers**
  - i. Identify resources needed to do an annual facility assessment
  - ii. Perform thorough bi-annual assessment resulting in a system for prioritizing the repair, replacement or closure of facilities
  - iii. Report results to stakeholders
  - iv. Coordinate findings of improvement plan for aging facilities, pools and park amenities with asset management



## C. Evaluate the distribution of programs across the city

1. **Conduct gap analysis of programming**
  - i. Maintain current programs inventory by location, type and service delivery method
  - ii. Improve mechanisms to reach target populations
  - iii. Develop action plan to fill all programming gaps and to include funding strategies
2. **Determine barriers to program participation**
  - i. Assess program pricing structure for affordability by conducting a user survey
  - ii. Update annually geospatial analysis of similar programs offered by other providers
3. **Increase participation of targeted demographics**
  - i. Evaluate current audiences and target markets
  - ii. Improve mechanisms for outreach to markets identified in previous task
  - iii. Leverage Austin's creative economy to provide cultural, historical programming
  - iv. Establish citizen supported criteria for sunseting of programs

## D. Adopt a comprehensive and cooperative approach to identifying community needs and service gaps

1. **Develop partnerships with other city departments and community partners to ensure quality completion of capital improvement and relevant city projects**
  - i. Identify potential partners with whom to work collaboratively on specific, relevant capital improvement and city projects

## E. Meet ADA Requirements

1. **Complete an ADA Transition Plan to develop compliance standards to meet local, state, and federal accessibility laws**
  - i. Seek resources to carry out plan and budget accordingly
  - ii. Execute an ADA Transition Plan that can be phased to ensure orderly and timely compliance with ADA standards
  - iii. Assess gaps in ADA access in all amenities, facilities and prioritize sequence of addressing them (physical barriers)

## Imagine Austin Core Principle



## GOAL III

### Protect Austin's Parkland and Facilities for Our Future Generations

As Austin looks into the future, we face constrained resources and the impacts of climate change. We are committed to protecting our natural resources in order to enhance Austin's future. The Parks and Recreation Department will improve the sustainability of our parkland and facilities for future generations by proactively implementing green practices. We will strengthen our green infrastructure by designing and maintaining environmentally-friendly parkland and park amenities. The Parks and Recreation Department will respond to Austin's emergent water and energy issues by preserving our natural ecosystems through conservation practices department and city wide.

#### A. Design and maintain environmentally sustainable parks and facilities

1. **Encourage environmental stewardship through community outreach and education**
  - i. Educate community members on proper use of the greenbelt, preserves, and trail heads to encourage responsible use of such spaces
  - ii. Adopt priorities of the Wildlife Austin Initiative
2. **Create an internal work group for environmental and sustainable maintenance practices and design**
  - i. Determine Best Management Practices for green infrastructure maintenance and operations
  - ii. Inventory current sustainability practices
  - iii. Evaluate financial impact of proposed best practice strategies
  - iv. Develop policies and procedures that support best practices
  - v. Train operations and maintenance staff on adopted sustainability practices
3. **Create a comprehensive land management plan for all preserves and greenbelts**
  - i. Develop natural resources through green practices
  - ii. Develop a wildfire mitigation plan
  - iii. Develop a management plan for self-sustaining wildlife habitats
  - iv. Develop and adopt a land management plan
  - v. Train staff on land management plan
4. **Develop and implement a strategic planting plan to address gaps in species or address other environmental factors**



#### QUICK FACT

In 2015, Parks and Recreation Department staff and neighborhood volunteers planted 10,199 trees on public property.



## B. Establish and implement best practices to preserve assets and facilities

1. **Develop and implement an asset management plan to ensure continued safe and reliable performance and service delivery**
  - i. Develop continuous reporting systems that identify needs with costs to implement the needs
  - ii. Determine number of staff needed to coordinate and implement asset management across the City and Department
2. **Preserve historical facilities through best practices**
  - i. Identify and inventory historical facilities
  - ii. Develop maintenance practices and procedures for preservation of historical facilities



## C. Respond to Austin’s water and energy conservation needs through integrated regional strategies

1. **Research and adopt best practices for water and energy management and conservation**
  - i. Partner with the Office of Sustainability to assess water and electric usage and develop strategies to reduce and conserve
  - ii. Participate in the city-wide task force on water conservation
  - iii. Create a “Conservation Manager” position within the department to oversee all irrigation and facility-based water and energy

### QUICK FACT

The Parks and Recreation Department maintains over 656,197 square feet of facility space - that’s 15 acres.



## Imagine Austin Core Principle



**MANAGE WATER, ENERGY  
AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL  
RESOURCE SUSTAINABLY**

## GOAL IV

### Achieve and Maintain a Standard of Excellence for Park Systems

Austin is nationally recognized for its exceptional parks, live music, festivals, theatre and creative art forms. We work collectively to make our city the most livable, connected and prosperous in the nation. More over, we achieve standards of excellence through providing safe and accessible parks and facilities, delivering excellent customer service and adopting national best practices in our service delivery and business models. PARD will realize a world-class park system by taking a data driven approach to management, improving organizational efficiency and meeting and exceeding national standards outlined by the parks and recreation industry.

#### A. Provide safe parks and facilities

1. **Achieve national industry standards for emergency management, safety, and security functions**
2. **Ensure citizens of all abilities can safely participate in programs and services within a safe and accessible environment**
  - i. Provide ongoing staff training to meet inclusion and accessibility objectives
  - ii. Complete an ADA Transition Plan to develop compliance standards to meet local, state, and federal accessibility laws
  - iii. Assess gaps in ADA access in all amenities, facilities and prioritize sequence of addressing them (physical barriers)

#### QUICK FACT

The PARD online registration and payment system, activated in 2014, processed 11,302 transactions for over \$1.1 million in FY15.



#### B. Deliver excellent customer service

1. **Transform Department infrastructure to support internal and external customer service**
  - i. Create technical solutions that allow citizens to acquire up-to-date information and resources regarding PARD programs
  - ii. Seek funding through budget process to acquire or develop technology to allow citizens timely access to Department program information
  - iii. Acquire and train staff on utilization of digital device applications so the staff can better help the public
  - iv. Roll out to the public the PARD digital device app and conduct a survey to determine effectiveness
  - v. Provide public WiFi connectivity at key Department facilities
2. **Implement a customer service strategy based on Department's customer service**
3. **Ensure citizens of all abilities have access to and can safely participate in programs and services in accordance with the City of Austin's customer service initiative**

## C. Automate administrative and operational tasks to improve efficiency

1. **Modernize technology to support key Department business initiatives**
  - i. Plan and initiate project(s) to convert to paperless documentation
  - ii. Implement Cemetery Information Management System (CIMS)
  - iii. GIS-based asset management/work order system
  - iv. Extend Greater Austin Area Telecommunication Network (GAATN) to major Department facilities
2. **Create data-driven tools for planning and developing land, facilities, and programs**
  - i. Develop Department data warehouse
  - ii. Develop data-driven **dashboards** and **scorecards**
  - iii. Implement SD Scorecard/PASS Database

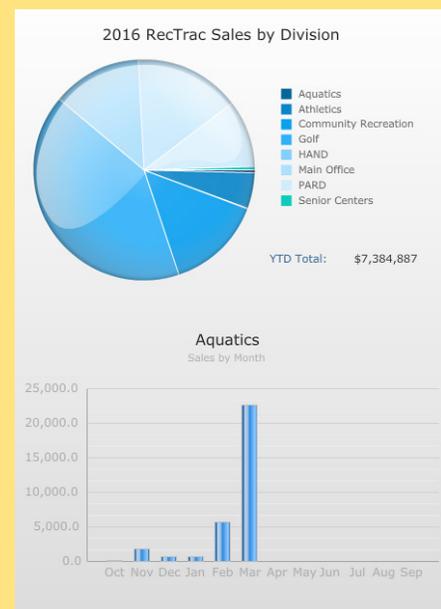
## D. Attain National Industry Standards for Parks and Recreation Programs and Services

1. **Achieve accreditation through Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies in 2017**
2. **Identify and implement a strategy to improve ParkScore issued by Trust for Public Land**
3. **Establish methodology to collect, measure and track annual departmental progress for attaining industry standards and best practices**

## QUICK FACT

A **scorecard** is a static graphic representation of data.

A **dashboard** is similar but allows dynamic, real-time access to underlying data.



RecTrac Revenue Dashboard

## Imagine Austin Core Principle



**INTEGRATE NATURE  
INTO THE CITY**

## GOAL V

### Diversify Funding Strategies for Austin Parks and Recreation Services

The challenge of finite fiscal resources and a rapidly growing population requires the Department to seek creative and innovative solutions to fund our extensive park system. Austin’s spirit of creativity and sense of community position our Department to meet these challenges and harness the collective energy of our community through partnerships and collaboration. PARD will identify additional funding mechanisms to achieve sustainable service models through data-driven analysis that support program outcomes and fill gaps between increased demand for services and parkland assets due to population growth and cultural changes.

#### A. Institute a Department-wide cost recovery culture and plan

1. **Assess current fee structure and establish criteria for setting fees Department-wide**
  - i. Develop database to calculate total direct and indirect costs for service delivery
  - ii. Set cost recovery expectations based on service area categories and level of service criteria
2. **Institute systems to identify funding gaps**

#### B. Cultivate partnerships to enhance service delivery and operations

1. **Identify barriers to sustainable partnerships**
  - i. Create a workgroup to identify current barriers and potential solutions to partnerships
  - ii. Standardize the Department’s agreements to expedite the partnering process
  - iii. Expand partnership impact with existing partners
2. **Take a proactive approach to identifying partnering opportunities**
  - i. Identify opportunities for partnership
  - ii. Develop specific strategies for different partnership types (public/public, public/private, community initiated)
  - iii. Develop and apply evaluation criteria for partnerships to measure benefits

#### C. Evaluate inter-jurisdictional shared land use and

#### QUICK FACT

Number of new public/private partnerships:

2015	10
2014	6
2013	5



## capital planning projects to ensure equitable cost distribution and resource allocation

1. **Verify roles and responsibilities of all parties**
  - i. Standardize contractual agreements for public-private and inter-agency agreements
  
2. **Design a system to coordinate current, plan for future inter-agency land use, capital Improvement, programming, and operational efforts**
  - i. Task PARD staff to develop system including review of existing inter-jurisdictional agreements, planning and acquisition, capital programming needs, operational costs, and best practices and develop recommendations
  - ii. Vet system with interagency workgroup/ stakeholders to review processes



## D. Leverage Austin’s creative economy to supplement cultural, historical and environmental programming

1. **Develop systematic approach to cultivating and recruiting programming partners from the business community**
  - i. Develop a database of potential cultural, historical, and environmental programming partners (Hill Country Conservancy, Travis Audubon, etc.)
  - ii. Research and determine applicable business and legal considerations and constraints related to potential partnership

## QUICK FACT

Annual Volunteer  
Hours FY15  
49,452



## Imagine Austin Core Principle



DEVELOP AS AN AFFORDABLE AND  
HEALTHY COMMUNITY

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## Appendix A: Demographic & Budget Information



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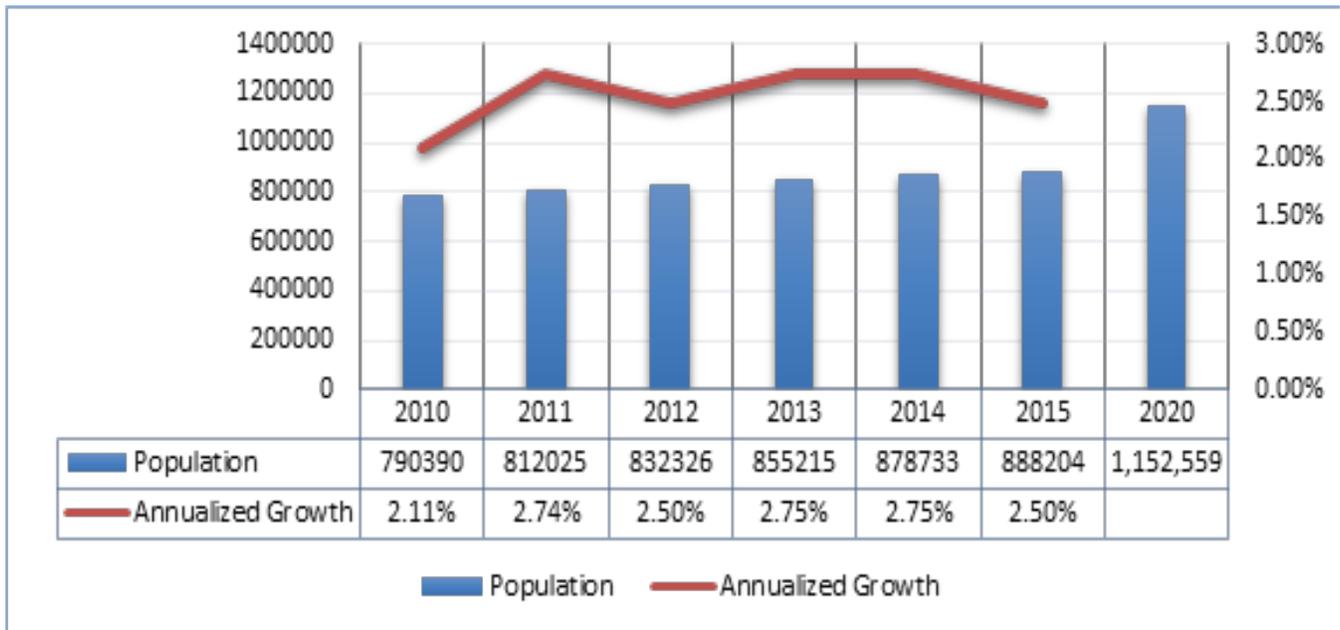
## Austin Overview

A city’s parks and recreational system directly reflects what city residents value. The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) operates a rich, extensive, diverse set of parks, programs, facilities and services. Many things influence the services and amenities a community’s parks and recreation system provides including the community demographic, population trends and available funding. This section provides a high level overview of some of those trends affecting PAR as well as a brief description of PAR’s funding.

## Population & Demographic Trends

Austin has been cited by Forbes Magazine as the country’s “next biggest boomtown”. It is the third fastest growing city in the U.S. By 2020, the city’s population is expected to exceed 1,000,000 residents. Needless to say, this growth will have an impact on PAR’s existing resources and programs as well as on the demand for new parks and programs.

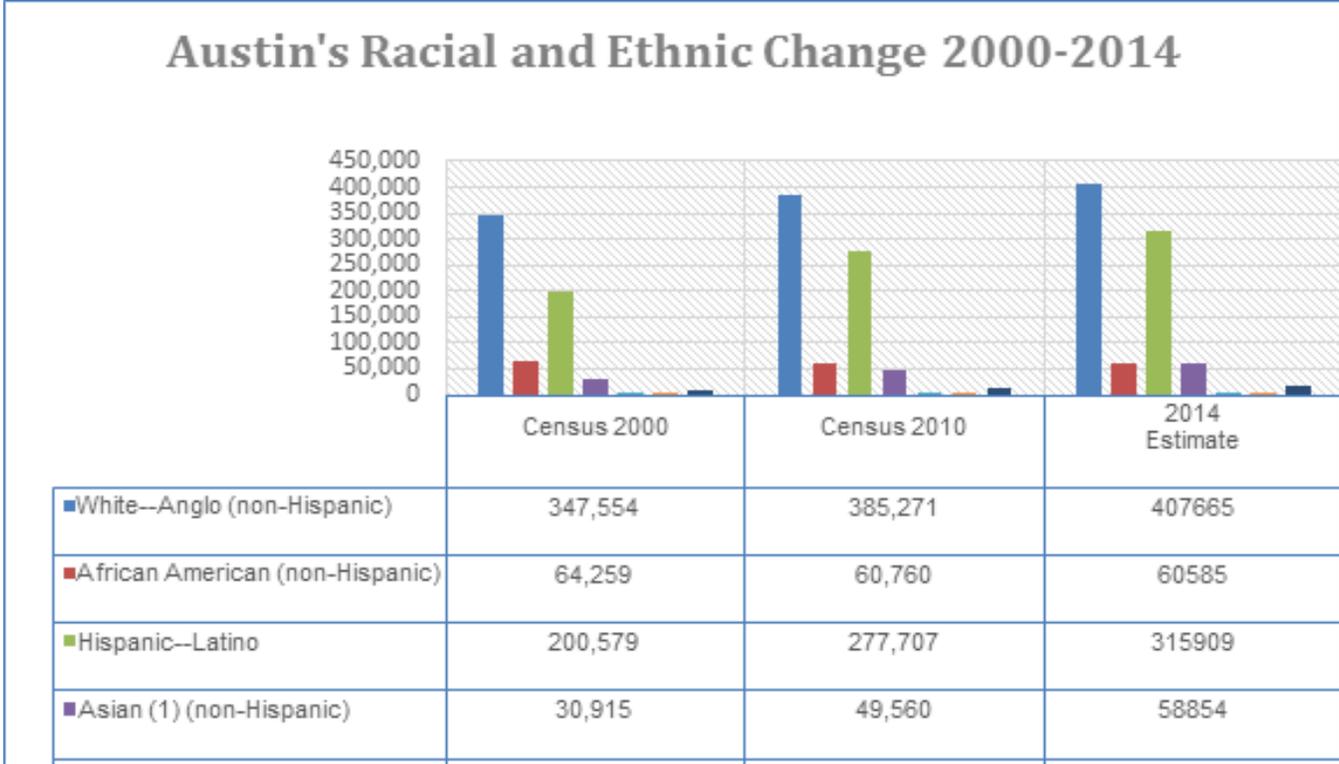
**Graphic 1. City Of Austin Population Growth 2010-2020 (Projected)**



**Source:** City Demographer, City of Austin Planning and Zoning Department, June 2015

The City has also seen significant geographic and population shifts. The White-Anglo and African American populations are decreasing as a percentage of the total population within Austin. Many families and seniors have moved outside Austin’s urban core to areas where fewer parks and amenities exist. While Austin’s Asian population has almost doubled since 2000, in terms of growth, the Hispanic-Latino population continues to dominate.

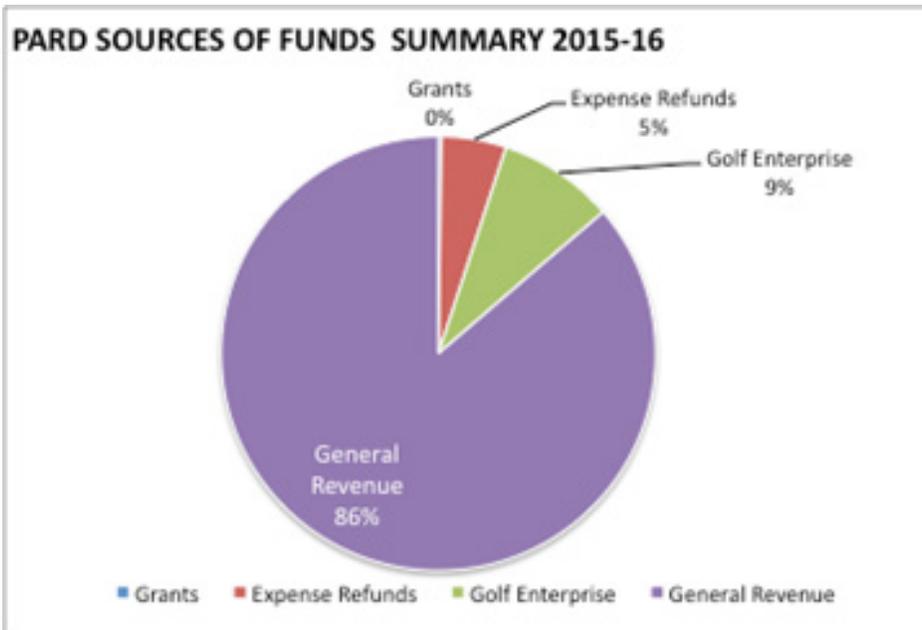
**Graphic 2. Austin’s Racial and Ethnic Change 2000-2014**



**Source:** City Demographer, City of Austin Planning and Zoning Department, June 2015

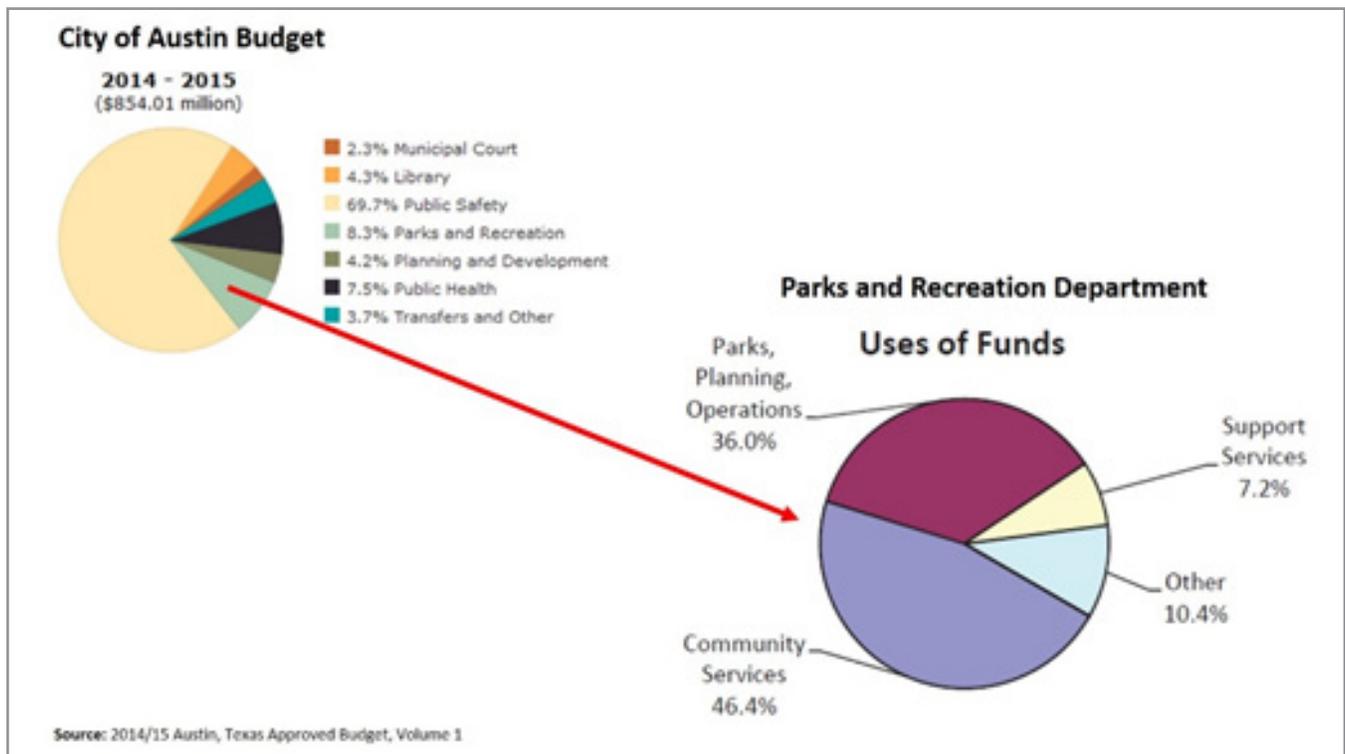
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## PARD Funding



As a percent of the City of Austin’s budget, the Department’s share increased from 7.5 percent in FY2014 to 8.3 percent in FY2015. The PARD operating budget in FY15 was slightly less than \$75 million dollars. The City of Austin budgeted \$85.3 million for the department in FY16 and approximately 687.75 full time employees. The majority of the Department’s funding comes from the City’s General Revenue Fund. The next largest source of revenue

for PARD is its Golf Enterprise. More than 82 % of the Department’s funding is spent on programs and parks’ operations and maintenance. The graphic below shows the Department as a percent of city funding and how the appropriated funds are spent.



## City of Austin Mission, Vision & PRIDE Values

In developing its 2016-2021 Strategic Plan, PARD carefully considered the City of Austin’s mission, vision, and values to ensure that the PARD Plan aligns with the City’s values. The Austin City Manager’s Office developed the City of Austin’s mission and vision. The City’s adopted mission statement is:

### ***To make Austin the best-managed city in the country***

The vision statement the city adopted is:

To make Austin the city everyone’s talking about—so others will look to us for best-practices, innovation and inspiration.

Austin also espouses a set of values that create the word PRIDE. The city’s value statements follow:

**Partner**—we will partner with one another and with our community to provide the recreational, cultural and outdoor experiences for the Austin community.

**Responsibility & Accountability**—we take responsibility for achieving results and hold ourselves accountable for our actions.

**Innovation & Sustainability**—we actively seek out good ideas that have a lasting, positive impact on our work, our community, and our environment.

**Diversity & Inclusion**—we recognize and respect a variety of perspectives, experiences, and approaches that will help us achieve our organizational goals.

**Ethics & Integrity**—our action will maintain the trust and confidence of the public and the best service.

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## Appendix B—Strategic Planning Process



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## Overview

The Parks and Recreation Department, through the Austin Parks Foundation, hired RH2 Consulting, a local management and public policy firm, to assist with the strategic planning process. The strategic planning process consisted of five key phases all of which were designed to support the agency’s plan development. During this process, the goal was to cast as broad a net as possible to ensure maximum stakeholder participation. Following is a brief timeline, activity summary and key findings or results.

### Strategic Planning Timeline

Phases	Specific Activity	Timeline
<b>Learning</b>		
Phase 1	Key Document and Data Review	January 2015
<b>Stakehold Engagement</b>		
Phase 2	Key Informant Interviews	February and March 2015
Phase 3	Focus Groups	April 2015
Phase 4	Electronic Surveys	May 2015
<b>Plan Development</b>		
Phase 5	PARD Strategic Planning Retreat	July 2015
Phase 6	PARD Division Strategic Planning Work Sessions	August-September 2015

### Key Document and Data Review

This phase provided the RH2 team with a solid understanding of the “as is” situation at the department. RH2 reviewed PARD’s annual reports including the department’s business; long range; asset management; climate protection; and capital improvement plans as well as yearly staff feedback; accreditation standards submissions; website materials; and other relevant departmental documents. Further, the consultants examined strategic plans from over 15 parks and recreation departments across the country and national association materials for benchmarking purposes and to identify industry best practices.

RH2 collected and reviewed data on PARD’s revenue sources, parks acreage, playground, pool and facilities condition, staffing patterns, and facility and program usage. The consultants also studied city population, economic and demographic trends.

## Key Informant Interviews

During the second phase of RH2’s work and the first step in stakeholder engagement, RH2 interviewed key informants that includes the Executive Leadership Team. The interview guide posed 11 questions regarding the leadership’s view of the department’s current mission and vision statements, the public perception of the Department, the department’s greatest challenges and accomplishments, and where they saw the Department heading. A list of those interviewed included:

### Key Informant List

Name	Position
Sara Hensley	Director
Kim McNeeley	Assistant Director
Cora Wright	Assistant Director
John Nixon	Communications & Marketing Manager
Robert Sopronyi	Organization Development Specialist

### Focus Groups

Stakeholder engagement consisted of 12 focus groups with 112 PARD full-time employees or about 20 percent of the department’s full-time employees. Focus group participants had a wide range of experience with the department; ranging from 3 months to 30 years. The average length of service was a little over 9 years. Field staff from various divisions within the Department comprised 8 of the 12 focus groups, while four (4) were comprised of mid-level managers from different divisions. Focus groups helped assess the alignment between upper management, division directors, program managers, and line staff.

### Electronic Surveys – Internal and Community

RH2 sought to further analyze staff alignment with the community through two electronic surveys – one with internal PARD staff and one with the Austin community. The internal survey was taken by two hundred and sixty-nine (269) PARD employees or more than 40 percent of PARD’s workforce. Four hundred and seventy (470) Austin community members participated in the external survey.

### PARD Respondents

RH2 asked Department employees (internal respondents) to identify in what division they worked. RH2 aggregated some of the smaller divisions like Administration and Support Services to protect respondent’s identities. Every division had employees who responded to the survey. The greatest percentage of the responses came from Grounds Maintenance and Community Services followed by Administrative and Support Services and Nature-Based Programs. The survey also asked how long the respondent had been a PARD employee. Again, responses were distributed across response choices with the greatest percentage of respondents having been employed at PARD over 10 years.

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## Community Respondents

Similarly, RH2 asked community respondents about their zip code and how long they had lived in Austin. Community members from 44 Austin area zip codes responded to the survey. Twenty-one (21) zip codes accounted for 94 percent of the total with zip codes 78757, 78731, and 78704 accounting for about 40 percent of the responses. More than 57 percent of the community members responding to the survey had lived in Austin and surrounding areas more than 20 years. Another 19 percent had lived in Austin more than 10 years.

RH2 designed the survey questions to validate or “triangulate” the responses given during PARD key informant interviews and focus groups.

<b>Comparison of Community and PARD Priorities</b>		
<b>Most Critical Challenges/Trends</b>	<b>PARD Employees</b>	<b>Community Members</b>
Keeping Up With Population Growth	1	4
Ensuring Parks Property & Facilities Are Safe	N/A	2
Fixing or Replacing Aging Facilities	2	1
Equitable Distribution of Services/Programs within each City Council District	4	3
Offering Competitive Wages So There Are Enough Seasonal Workers for Pools and Summer Programs	6	5
Replacing Workers Who Will Retire Soon	7	6
Upgrading or Acquiring Technology to Improve Registration or Parks Processes	5	7
New City Council Structure	3	N/A

Source: Survey Monkey Survey, RH2 Consulting, May and June 2015

Please Note: PARD employees were not asked about park safety as this is always a priority, and the public was not asked about the new council structure as this was an internal City of Austin issue.

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## Strategic Planning Retreat

PARD executive leadership, Division Managers, and division leadership participated in a one-day strategic planning retreat where participants drafted mission and vision statements, goals and strategic initiatives. RH2 provided participants with a pre-reading document that included the following:

1. City of Austin trends and demographic information
2. PARD's current mission statement and vision statement
3. Examples of mission and vision statements from other parks and recreation agencies and the City of Austin
4. Findings from internal interviews with PARD senior executives, 12 internal PARD focus groups, and internal and community e-survey results

## Division Level Work Sessions

Following the strategic planning tetreat, RH2 conducted two half-day work sessions with PARD seadership and Division Managers. During these sessions, participants developed action strategies and tasks for each of the goal-strategic initiative sets developed at the strategic planning retreat.

## Keeping the Strategic Plan Current

A strategic plan is a living document, one that should be updated annually to reflect circumstances at that moment. Before the plan is updated each year, the work groups, planning staff and external stakeholders will, at a minimum, complete the following tasks:

- Review internal documents including the budget, long range and capital improvement plans
- Review data collected on customer satisfaction, program enrollment, facility usage
- Engage internal and external stakeholders in the review of the previous year's strategic plan goals, strategic initiatives and the department's progress in meeting goals of the plan.
- Hold a retreat with the Executive Leadership Team and departmental managers to review the department's current strategic direction and progress toward reaching the previous year's goals
- Create an annual strategic plan update incorporating internal and external stakeholder input, relevant budgetary or other impacts that require a change in strategic direction
- Develop internal and external communication messages and delivery mechanisms concerning the strategic plan progress

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**AUSTIN PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT**

**STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2022**

***INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP IN PARKS AND  
RECREATION EXPERIENCES***

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